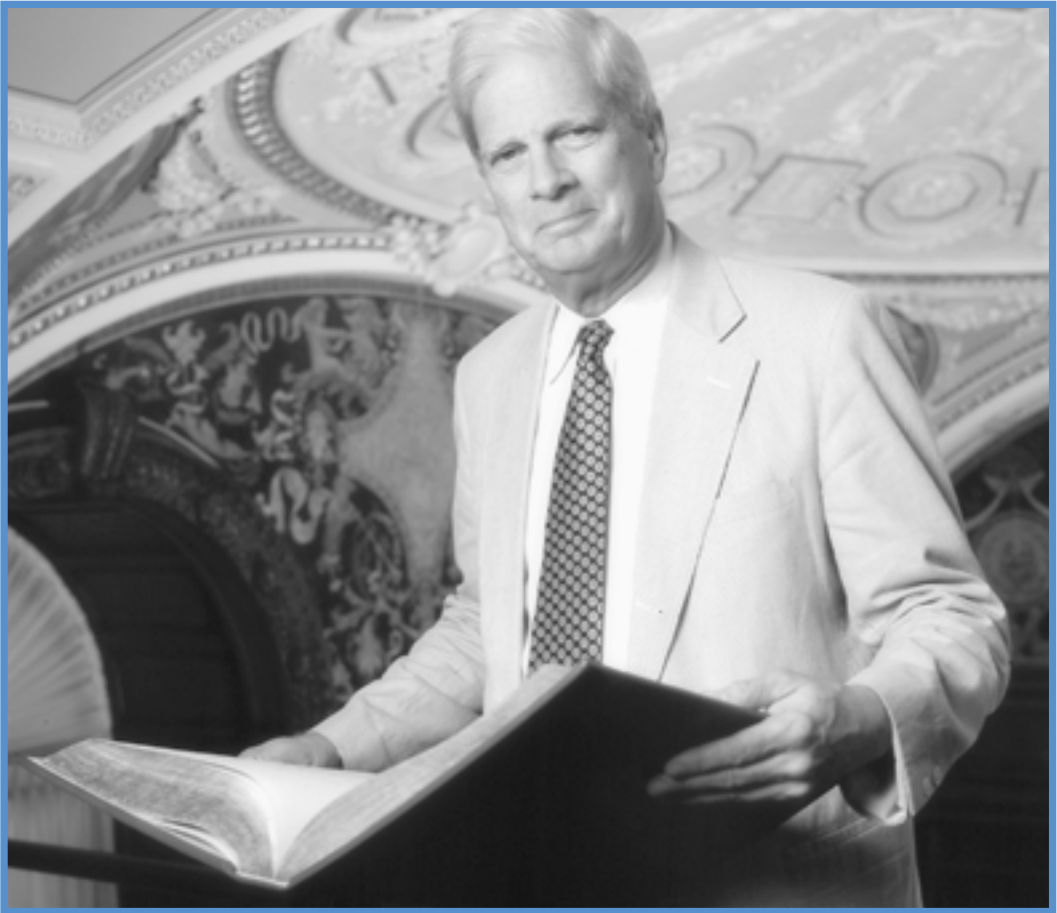


LETTER FROM THE LIBRARIAN OF CONGRESS



August 28, 2003

The Congress of the United States has been the greatest patron of a library in the history of the world – mandating and funding the programs of this unique resource for knowledge on a nonpartisan basis for 203 years. The Library of Congress under its 2004-2008 strategic plan will continue to build on its historic mission, “...to make its resources available and useful to the Congress and the American people and to sustain and preserve a universal collection of knowledge and creativity for future generations.” We are faced with the greatest upheaval in the transmission of knowledge since the invention of the printing press: the electronic onslaught of digitized multimedia communication. This strategic plan will guide the Library as it superimposes a new, networked digital universe on top of its traditional artifactual (analog) collections.

“Every day in America is a new beginning,” Ronald Reagan used to say. *“We are a nation that never becomes, but that is always becoming.”* The 20th century saw an enormous expansion of the collections. With the Congress’s support, the Library of Congress became

the most universal collection of information and knowledge in the history of the world. The Library's superbly qualified staff now directly serves the Congress through public policy research service, and we serve the nation's libraries with cataloging data, material for the blind, and many electronic services.

When I was sworn as Librarian in late 1987, I defined the task ahead as moving the Library "out more broadly and in more deeply." This remains my focus more than 16 years later as we embark on new initiatives and programs of great potential value to the Congress, to America's communities, and to the world. The strategic plan sets forth 18 goals targeted to reach our vision of leading the nation in ensuring access to knowledge and information and in promoting its creative use for the Congress and its constituents. Integrated within our goals are key objectives focused on: our top priority of serving the Congress regardless of time or place; sustaining and preserving our inclusive collections; getting the National Audio-Visual Conservation Center up and running; implementing the Copyright Office's reengineered processes; completing the development of, and beginning the conversion to, digital talking book technology for blind and physically handicapped persons; strengthening the digital competencies of our knowledge navigator-curators; and making the transition to a networked digital environment.

In reaching the plan's goals, the Library will continue to depend primarily on appropriated support. Supplementing private support – particularly from the James Madison Council, John Kluge through the Kluge Center, and David Woodley Packard through the Packard Humanities Institute – will help in many ways to "get the champagne out of the bottle" with facilities exhibitions, electronic educational enrichment, and special acquisitions for the national collection.

The future of all of the Library's efforts depends on our greatest asset, the expertise, intellect, and dedication of a Library staff that makes our vast collections and services relevant and accessible. Management must seek to train, develop, and renew our staff and add fresh talent to sustain our leadership role in the 21st century.

Our strategic plan will help ensure that this Library – the research and information arm of the national legislature and the world's largest storehouse of knowledge – continues its great tradition, which now also includes Congressionally mandated leadership in the digital networked environment, in support of the Congress, the public, and the democratic ideal.


THE LIBRARIAN OF CONGRESS